DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 409 552 CS 012 879

AUTHOR Schweiker, Karyn E.; Schweiker, William F.
TITLE Research Findings on Awareness, Acceptance, and Practice of Emergent Literacy Theory.
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Educational Research Association (Clearwater Beach, FL, February 17-22, 1993).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Early Childhood Education; *Emergent Literacy; Ethnography; Knowledge Base for Teaching; Professional Development; Qualitative Research; School Culture; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teaching Styles; *Theory Practice Relationship
IDENTIFIERS Research Suggestions; Theoretical Orientation

ABSTRACT

A qualitative ethnographic study examined three early childhood teachers' awareness, acceptance, and implementation of emergent literacy theory. The three teachers, from three different schools in two neighboring mid-Atlantic states, were chosen for their contrasting teaching styles. Each classroom was observed by a non-participant observer for the entire length of each class session on the average of once a week over a six week period. Results indicated that two of the teachers were aware, accepted, and attempted to practice emergent literacy theory. Practice of emergent literacy theory was dependent upon awareness and acceptance. Teacher awareness and acceptance was influenced by four themes--teacher knowledge, autonomy in teaching, professional development, and school culture. Future research should further examine the relationship among school culture, teacher knowledge, and autonomy; distinguish among those forms of professional development which result in more informed teachers; and determine if these variables interrelate differently for different genders. (Contains 23 references, a table, and a chart demonstrating factor interrelationships.) (RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 409 552

Research Findings On Awareness, Acceptance, and Practice of Emergent Literacy Theory

Karyn E. Schweiker and William F. Schweiker
West Virginia University and California University of Pennsylvania

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Eastern Educational Research Association, Clearwater Beach, Florida, 1993.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

K. Schweiker

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Karyn E. Schweiker
William F. Schweiker
Route 1 Box 201D
Morgantown, W. V. 26505

CS012878

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Research Findings On Awareness, Acceptance, and Practice of Emergent Literacy Theory

By Karyn Schweiker and William Schweiker

Emergent literacy can be described as "the reading and writing behaviors that precede and develop into conventional literacy" (Sulzby, 1989). This term, which evolved during the 1980's, can be traced in part to Marie Clay's (1966,1967) studies during the late 1960's. Numerous phrases (print awareness, early literacy, concepts about print) were employed all referring to the same concept. This ambiguity resulted in creation of a common term, "emergent literacy", which has gained acceptance both by the research community and practitioners (Wells,1988).

Emergent literacy refers to the earliest period of a child's literacy development, the time between birth and when the child can read and write (Sulzby and Teale, 1991). In emergent literacy theories the child is the central figure in constructing learning. Emphasis is on the child's interaction with the learning environment. Therefore, the child's contribution must be examined within the context of the child's social environment (Barnhart & Sulzby, 1989). The term "literacy" has enlarged the field of reading to encompass writing and oral language development within "literate"environments (Cochran,1984).

Along with a variety of definitions, there are a number of theoretical perspectives in the area of emergent literacy. One perspective is that a child is innately predisposed to becoming literate (Sulzby and Teale, 1991). This is believed to occur only in an environment which is rich in literary articles and activities. Another theoretical perspective utilizes a Piagetian viewpoint (Piaget, 1959). That is, literacy is actively constructed through the child's interaction with the environment. The emphasis is on how the child's concepts are constructed, changed, and differ from adult concepts.

A third perspective has been built upon Vygotsky's (1978) thoughts on literacy and learning, whereby the social interaction between the adult and the child is stressed. The child learns literacy through conversation and involvement in literacy acts. This interaction

between adult and child is referred to as "scaffolding". Scaffolding occurs when a knowledgeable adult has gently guided the child's performance through successive literacy activities while relinquishing more and more autonomy to the child.

Influences from both Piaget and Vygotsky may be found in Dorothy Strickland's (1990) four underlying assumptions which provide a coherent framework for teacher practice. Strickland suggests that children's knowledge of their world and language is largely determined by the nature and quality of the meanings they construct when they begin to write. Thus, teachers should be aware that the child's method of constructing knowledge differs from that of adults. Beginning reading and writing, to a large extent, should start naturally through the child's exposure to print. This can be accomplished through social interaction between the child and the supportive adult within the classroom. Children, as well as adults, have needs for reading and writing in their lives---literacy is learned best when it is viewed as a functional and useful part of their environment. Finally, the teacher, by exposing the child to a variety of literature, enables the child to build a sense of structure for the written text (p 690).

Given the extent of current research in the area of emergent literacy theory (Mason & Allen,1986; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Teale,1987) one might expect over the past fifteen years, that teachers in the field of early childhood would be well versed. However, Troyer's (1989) examination of early childhood teachers' abilities to predict phonemic awareness capabilities (an emergent literacy concept) in their students, showed that a significant number "of their teachers were unaware of the concept and its role in a beginning reading program". A subsequent study (Troyer & Yopp, 1990) of teachers' knowledge of several emergent literacy concepts showed that knowledge of terminology was related to the teachers' attendance at graduate courses rather than years of teaching experience. Younger teachers with less experience possessed greater knowledge than older, more experienced teachers. In contrast, a study by Levande (1990) stated that, on the whole, teachers cited their classroom experiences as the greatest influence on their beliefs about reading

and reading instruction. In the same study it was found that teachers with whole language approaches felt that staff development had strongly influenced their beliefs and practices. Given the importance of emergent literacy theory there is a need to know the relationship between teachers' awareness and acceptance of emergent literacy theory and their practice of that theory in their classrooms.

Purpose

There was a threefold purpose to this study. The first was to examine three early childhood teachers' awareness of emergent literacy theory. The second purpose was to determine whether there was an acceptance of that theory. The third purpose was to examine whether the teachers implemented the theory. Thus, three questions are posed: 1) why are some teachers aware of the term emergent literacy, its definition, and theory? 2) what is related to acceptance of emergent literacy theory?; and 3) why is emergent literacy theory evidenced in the classroom instructional practices of some, but not others?

Method

Three early childhood teachers' awareness, acceptance and practice of emergent literacy theories were examined through a qualitative ethnographic study. Awareness was defined as the teachers' realizations, perceptions, or knowledge; while acceptance meant the agreeing either expressly or by conduct with the stated theory. Practice included the actual performance or application of emergent literacy theory. Sulzby defines (1989) emergent literacy as the reading or print-awareness, oral language development, and writing behaviors that precede and develop into conventional literacy. A phenomenological approach is utilized to study how the teachers define the term "emergent literacy" and compare their definition with Sulzby's. Curriculum as well as instructional practices are examined in light of Sulzby's definition. The theoretical perspective of each

teacher was determined through an analysis of their interview statements and then compared with their curriculum plans and actual instructional practices.

Participants

The participants in this study were three early childhood teachers from three different schools in two neighboring states. The participants were recommended by a university professor based upon their contrasting teaching approaches. Each teacher voluntarily participated in the study and was given a code name for the purpose of protecting teacher confidentiality. All three schools are located in mid-Atlantic states. Two of the schools are within a small city, while the third school is located in a rural area. The participants range in teaching experience from eight to twenty-five years, with two of the three teachers having master degrees. Two of the three teachers teach two sessions a day while the third teaches the same students for a full day. All of the teachers have an aide which is actively involved in teaching but not planning. Each teacher has approximately twenty-five students per session. All of the teachers state that they attend conferences, graduate classes, and frequently read professional journals. Information on the number of years teaching experience, highest degree held, type of session and type of school district for each teacher is contained in Table 1.

Data Collection

Each classroom was observed by a non-participant observer for the entire length of each class session on the average of once a week over a six week period and observations were recorded. Detailed field notes as well as photographs of the room were taken. Informal unstructured questions were asked of each teacher to better understand the type of approach utilized for their curriculum and instruction practices. These were noted in the researcher's journal. After the second observation a formal 30-45 minute audiotaped interview was conducted relating to the research question. Since one of the participants exhibited difficulty in answering questions concerning emergent literacy theory an indirect approach was taken. The teacher was asked questions concerning her teaching practices and their theoretical justification, if any. Documents were collected in the form of lesson plans, evaluation procedures, and specific

materials relating to that particular teacher's methods for designing her daily plan. The researchers kept detailed impressions of each teacher's behavior, her attitude toward the class, and the students' reaction to their teacher's instructions as noted during the observations.

Procedure

A phenomenological appproach to data analysis (Hycner,1985) was utilized. Each of the interviews was transcribed. After the interviews were transcribed, they were shared with each of the participants who were asked to verify the accuracy of the information. The transcripts were then segmented into idea units. Clusters within the data were identified and then catergorized. From the catergorizing several themes emerged. By matching the interview data with actual observations and lesson plans, triangulation was used to test for reliability and validity.

Results

The analysis of the transcripts resulted in four themes directly related to the teacher's awareness, acceptance, and practice of emergent literacy. Of the four themes only one had to do with a level of influence outside the teacher, school culture. The remaining three themes had to do with subjective phenonmena as expressed by the teachers. These included teacher knowledge, autonomy in teaching, and professional development.

School Culture. The teachers' school culture was found to have some affect on awareness, acceptance, and practice of emergent literacy research findings. School culture was defined as the collective knowledge, beliefs, and values of the administrator and staff that is manifested through their instructional practices and student behavior (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986). The three participants taught at three different schools with different school cultures. Two of the schools were moderately to strongly "traditional" while the third was more experimental. The experimental school was Ann's. This school had incorporated the whole language approach with the understanding that the teachers would need time to investigate and develop their program. An abundance of professional journals were supplied for the teachers in

order to achieve this goal. The whole school, moreover, was built as an open classroom which encouraged exchange of beliefs and curriculum ideas. The administrator encouraged comaradie and mutual support. This was most evident when Ann described her school environment:

We are a small school and we do become quite familiar with our children, our parents, and each other as we work together. For instance we have 37 children in just two large rooms. These are separated just by furniture.
As you can see,we are an open classroom physically as well as mentally. We share an assistant and the children see both kindergarten teachers and the assistant each day.

Throughout the interview, Ann spoke of her classroom practices and theoretical beliefs using the collective "we", as follows:

We try to approach language, math, everything we teach---science ,with as much hands-on as we can....

When asked why she referred to her own classroom practices with "we", she explained:

I guess it's because of our principal. You see, since starting into the whole language approach he has encouraged us to share and work together. He has even provided us with the mutual planning times so we can interact tand share our new findings. We often discuss our views on children's learning and come to a new understanding.

Ann's classroom was similar to other classrooms throughout the rest of the school except that her classroom was a huge area that she shared with two other teachers. Separations were created by moveable blackboards, bookshelves, desks, and children's play furniture. The walls were covered with bright bulletin boards displaying children's work along with labeled numbers or colors. Tables were set apart from the circle area which was arranged for discussion. Shelves were filled with tools for writing and drawing. A carpeted area alongside a well-stocked children's bookshelf provided a place for quiet reading. Classrooms reflected this open classroom environment throughout the school building. Two teachers

typically shared a common area with the only division being created by bookcases.

In contrast, Agnes' school was strongly traditional with a culturally diverse student body. The principal's influence was subtle, since he was in charge of two schools. The faculty was conservative and as a whole, was resistant to change. This became apparent when Agnes described her colleagues.

When we first started the new project, I made copies of articles and put them in all of the teachers' mailboxes. As the year went on and I saw that there was practically no change and people seemed resistant, I quit pushing. Some of the teachers stated that I was asking too much.... This faculty tends to divide up into different cliques..... Now, I keep pretty much down this end of the building, and don't even see the intermediate grades since they're on a different schedule.

In observations at this school, this more traditional conservativism was quite apparent. Bells rang at regular intervals to inform teachers when to begin the next subject area. An observation of most rooms showed that children tended to be regimented at desks placed in straight rows, while the teacher sat at her desk correcting papers. The children were reminded to work quietly or raise their hands to ask a question. Leaving their seats was discouraged. Permission to use the bathroom was granted by asking the teacher. Bulletin boards were covered with commercially produced materials related to the season or holiday.

In opposition to the rest of the school, the walls of Agnes's classroom were lined with children's work which even continued out the door to cover the adjacent halls. Words were everywhere: labeling things, on children's papers, and all over a large bulletin board. Long tables were filled with writing tools, children's stories, and books. Areas for dress-up, house keeping, and puppetry were found among the toys that littered the room. Large experience charts covered the blackboard with children's names and statements. Both commercial and child-produced books, in various shapes and sizes were everywhere. Furniture was moved when needed and usually done so by the children. The children went to the lavatory when necessary without asking the teacher. Children spoke in conversational tones and interrupted each other with "excuse me,

out" rather than raising their hands. Academic subjects did not occur at a specific time period, but were thematically integrated throughout the day.

Nina's school subscribed to a moderately traditional curriculum approach. Unlike Agnes colleagues, this faculty was in agreement as to the purpose of the curriculum approach. The teachers frequently mentioned that preparing students for the next grade was very important. The school was involved in a curriculum change as a result of a university program. Teachers frequently referred to university professors for curriculum information. The faculty was also small and each teacher was in charge of a particular area of the curriculum. It was understood that each teacher would be in charge of a particular curriculum area and would receive assistance in obtaining information or training that would be necessary. Nina confidently explained:

Kathleen and I are the coordinators for the Developmentally Appropriate Committee, one of our themes for the long range plan. She said that she has piles of information on this and the university consultant is going to come and show us everything. Other faculty members are in charge of other themes, but we will develop this one.

When asked about her principal's involvement with the school curriculum plan Nina stated:

Oh, she (the principal) has an equal vote with us. What I mean is, that we decide together who will chair that theme and then that person sets up that whole area for the school.

Nina's classroom was arranged similar to the upper grade classrooms except instead of desks her students had tables. Children were expected to raise their hands, sit in their seats, and be quiet while doing their work. Midway through the observation period, the tables were arranged so that they faced the blackboard in rows resembling groupings of desks. When questioned as to why the format of the room had been changed to this arrangement Nina explained:

We (the teacher and aide) did it this way once for a punishment to

keep them from talking so much, but now we do it to stress that they must act like first graders. They seem to like it.

Agnes's and Nina's schools had similar (traditional) cultures. Ann's school culture was a more experimental (liberal) one. Although Nina's and Ann's school cultures differed, both teachers were integrated into them. Agne's classroom and curriculum approach were discordant with her school's culture.

Teacher Knowledge. Two of the three early childhood teachers, Ann and Agnes, were appearly knowledgeable in regards to emergent literacy research, which affected their awareness, acceptance, and practice of emergent literacy research findings. They could define emergent literacy and were aware of current theoretical approaches utilized in early childhood classrooms. When asked about the term emergent literacy Ann quickly defined the term as:

.....this includes the ability for children to understand their letters and sounds and abe able to pick up books and be aware of this connection to reading and writing.

Agnes explained emergent literacy in a similar manner:

The term relates to the pre-reading and writing behaviors of children as well as their speaking and listening development that leads to conventional reading and writing.

In contrast Nina began to shake her head "no" while the question was being asked and finally interrupted to inquire what the term meant. Upon hearing Sultzby's definition, she added:

You mean the type of reading series we use? In this county we ...ah...use the Silver-Burdette and Ginn reading series. The early childhood level is "Hickory Dickory Dock".

Similarly when discussing emergent literacy theory, both Ann and Agnes could articulate their views. Ann explained that her program stemmed from two sources. One of which was the county adopted whole language approach. The other source was a pre-school program which she had developed several years earlier as the

director of that program in another state. Both of these were built upon Piagetian theoretical principles and Strickland's assumptions. She explained:

I believe we have to build our students' knowledge in reading and writing through their own interaction with the environment and through adult guidance. We (sic) feel we can do this best by offering an environment filled with materials that provide opportunities to interact and develop an awareness of reading and writing knowledge. At the same time we build on that self-knowledge through our teacher planned activities.

Agnes's program had also been developed from several sources. After many years of reflective teaching and research she had developed her own curriculum. This curriculum had been strongly influenced by her year in Scotland studying the British Infant School as a Fulbright Teacher. Based on her experience, she describes her approach as:

I just think of it as child-centered approach, making a kid feel very important about what he writes and says and this is celebrated by the whole class and the adults in it. I mean you can't get a better start toward literacy.

In comparison, when Nina was asked how she would label her theoretical approach to emergent literacy, she was unsure and answered:

I don't know. You can call it anything you want.

When pressed Nina stated that she based her curriculum upon the county's recommended reading series and believed that the emergent literacy areas would be addressed and developed through the use of that series. She explained it by:

It (the county reading series) is a literature-based program and it integrates all subject areas into the reading. So probably just using the reading series would be enough.

To summarize while only two of the teachers could define emergent literacy, all three teachers could, to some degrees, explain the basis

for their programs. Agnes's and Ann's emergent literacy approach were developed from their own resources and other researched approaches. Nina's emergent literacy approach was based mainly upon the county adopted reading series and influenced by a learning styles system that her school had adopted as a part of a satellite program. She neither stated that her approach had been theory-based nor questioned the appropriateness of the county reading series for her classroom.

Autonomy in Teaching. Two of the three teachers, Ann and Agnes exhibited autonomy in their teaching which directly related to their awareness, acceptance, and practice of emergent literacy findings. They, as teachers, took sole responsibility for their curriculum program. They answered questions concerning emergent literacy knowledgeably and gave a philosophy as a basis for their curriculum program. Ann elaborated on this:

I try to approach language, math, everything I teach with as much hands-on activities as I can, involving the students in making some of their own materials, rather than purchasing them. I use mostly manipulatives and teacher-made materials. We talk about things; we sing about them; we move; we use paint... whatever. I use as many of their senses as I can. This allows the child to have an opportunity to have as much success as possible.

In a similar manner Agnes emphasized her approach as being child initiated:

I like to begin with the child and his or her curiosity and build on that to create their own knowledge of literacy. I belief that reading, writing, speaking, and listening really all can be merged into one. I begin the very first day to search for that creative child willing to construct their own story and then act it out with fellow classmates. This builds the enthusiasm of the other students so that within a few days almost all of the children have asked to write and perform their stories. That, I believe, is the beginning of literacy in a kindergarten classroom.

In contrast Nina discussed at length about her classroom activities and materials, but never clarified her personal beliefs concerning

emergent literacy. She tended to make general statements concerning her curriculum approach and frequently mentioned a new system learned through a university project. When directly asked what kind of theory and what curriculum approach she utilized for her students' emergent literacy needs, she answered non-specifically:

I think the reason I like the combination [of approaches], is all the knowledge that we have about learning styles. I think my kindergarten is probably developmently appropriate. I think, I don't know a whole lot about it. But I think because it is my degree, that when I find out about it, it already is a part of my program.

Another way that Ann and Agnes evidenced autonomy in their teaching was seen in their decision to develop, design, and select their own resources. Ann decided upon her materials after reviewing a variety of reading systems as a member of a board that evaluated textbooks. Since the county adopted the reading system for the primary grades and not kindergarten, they had to develop their own program provide their own materials. Ann describes how:

Although I am technically covering the concepts that the county wants me to, I am doing it in a different approach....mainly, with junk that I have gathered from home. This meant I did not have to buy materials. Therefore, with the money I saved I have purchased additional reading resource materials.

Similarly, Agnes has procured her own resources. In the early years of her program she had utilized a language experience approach, but about ten years ago she began to include more writing activities, inventive spelling, and group discussions. Resources for her program needed to include a wide variety of props, puppets, children's books, and collection of anthologies for various subject areas. These materials have been accumulated over a period of time with money saved from not ordering county textbooks. Other materials were either teacher-made or child-produced. In comparison Nina relied solely on county recommended teacher texts and utilized their manuals to direct her curriculum program.

Further evidence of autonomy was manifested by Agnes, when she continued to sustain her program despite opposition. This was not a problem for Ann and Nina since their programs aligned with their

school's beliefs and county's requirements. Agnes's program had been contrary to the county's recommendations and sometimes in conflict with her administrator. Despite this opposition she continued to believe in her program. When asked how she had been able to do this, she confessed:

I never believed in using commercially produced programs. I had always used my own approach and after my experience in Scotland I was sure that my approach was right.

Professional Development. All three teachers spoke of being involved with professional development, which affected their awareness, acceptance, and practice of emergent literacy research findings. Ann and Agnes both attended conferences and frequently read professional journals. They stated that they utilized this information to support and develop their emergent literacy program. During her interview Agnes stated that she often relied on conferences to clarify her curriculum approach by speaking with experts in the field.

.....So when I was talking to Shirley Raines down in Ripley at the state confernce, I asked her about the dilemma of children dictating their stories to adults. I realize that they do depend on you alot with dictation, but the rewards of making up their own story, acting it out, and the plus to their self-esteem to me was worth it. She kind of agreed with me, but at the same time I did agreed with her about pushing independence through inventive spelling.

Furthermore, it was through reading journal articles that a major change in her curriculum approach occurred. Agnes illustrated:

..... It was about almost ten years ago that I started doing more with it (her program). *I well, I was doing a lot of reading, I read Young Children and Early Childhood Education and I just got my ideas from them. I also learned a lot from my experience in Scotland. It wasn't until I was there and really saw the schools, that I really understood* (their program).

Ann utilized professional conferences to keep her program in align with research findings. At the time of the interview she had just

returned from a literature conference at a local university. She analized her purpose for attending:

I read educational articles to become aware of what is current in my field, but I attend conferences in order to see how these findings can be put into practice.

Nina stated, despite her apparent ignorance, that her curriculum was based upon her frequent readings and the training she had received as a part of a university satellite program.

I do lots of reading, lots of reading of magazines and books. And of course the training in the program. The university paid half and our district paid half. And I know they spent a lot of money. But it was worth it, because we are now certified to train others.

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors among three teachers related to their awareness, acceptance, and practice of emergent literacy theory. It was found that two of the teachers were aware, accepted, and attempted to practice emergent literacy theory. Practice of emergent literacy theory was found to be dependent upon awareness and acceptance. It was found that teacher awareness and acceptance was influenced by four themes; these themes are teacher knowledge, autonomy in teaching, professional development, and less importantly, school culture.

Teacher knowledge, while appearing to be central to awareness and acceptance, tended to be interrelated with autonomy in teaching and professional development. Both Agnes and Ann were knowledgeable of emergent literacy theory. They credited their professional development as the source of their knowledge. Their knowledge derived from reading educational journals and attending conferences. A strong autonomy in teaching was evidenced by their ability to independently create a curriculum. This autonomy further enabled them to seek that professional development which in turn resulted in their knowledge of emergent literacy.

Nina 's lack of emergent literacy knowledge was apparent by her inability to recognize or define the term. Without awareness of

emergent literacy knowledge she could neither accept nor practice it in her classroom. This lack of knowledge can in part be related to her dependence on outside authority in teaching. She relied heavily on the knowledge and beliefs of others. For her emergent literacy program she totally depended upon the county's basal reading series believing that if the county selected it "it would be enough". Outside authority was accepted for designing and implementing other approaches in her program.

Both Ann's autonomy and Nina's lack of it were apparently affected by their school culture. Ann's school culture encouraged autonomy in teaching in several ways. E.g., the adoption of a whole language approach that excluded early childhood required her to create her own program; the availability of educational journals (paid for by the school) promoted independent research. At the same time, a common planning time allowed her to share research information with her colleagues and exchange their educational views. Even the design of the building promoted experimentation and openess.

In contrast Nina's school culture tended to discourage autonomy in teaching. As a group the faculty decided to investigate a single learning approach. Their investigation involved contacting a university consultant, who informed them of an institute that offered a program utilizing that approach. Nina, along with her colleagues, received "training" in this method. Throughout her interview Nina never mentioned this program's theory or philosophy, but cited the expense of the training as validation of its importance. Her dependence on outside authority, such as university consultants, for knowledge was noticeable in other aspects of her professional life. Despite being given the opportunity to create a developmentally appropriate program, she waited for the university professor to *"come and show ...(her) everything"*.

Nina's lack of knowledge and autonomy in teaching resulted in a reliance on the county's basal reading series. Such reliance was found in previous research (Barksdale-Ladd and Thomas, in press; Barr,1987; Harste,1989; and Shannon,1989).

From her statements it was clear that Agnes was definitely aware of emergent literacy theory. In examining her classroom curriculum it was evident that she both accepted and practiced this theory. Although her school culture was not in agreement with Agnes's theoretical views, she persisted in developing her own emergent literacy program based upon her researched knowledge. It may be

on the county's basal reading series. Such reliance was found in previous research (Barksdale-Ladd and Thomas, in press; Barr,1987; Harste,1989; and Shannon,1989).

From her statements it was clear that Agnes was definitely aware of emergent literacy theory. In examining her classroom curriculum it was evident that she both accepted and practiced this theory. Although her school culture was not in agreement with Agnes's theoretical views, she persisted in developing her own emergent literacy program based upon her researched knowledge. It may be that Agnes's autonomy in her teaching coupled with her extensive teacher knowledge allowed her to discount any censure from her colleagues.

Nina's lack of emergent literacy knowledge is not an anomoly. Troyer found a significant number of such teachers (1989). Troyer & Yopp(1990) subsequentiy found that knowledge of emergent literacy was related to professional development in the form of attendance at graduate courses, but not to teaching experience. They also found younger less experienced teachers to be more knowledgeable than older more experienced teachers. Our study was more in agreement with the Levande study (1990) which found older more experienced teachers to be more knowledgeable of emergent literacy theory. Perhaps, this reflects the need for teachers to gain experience in order to gain autonomy in teaching.

Suggestions for future research include augmenting the sample size; to further examine the relationship between school culture, teacher knowledge and autonomy; to distinquish among those forms of professional development which result in more informed teachers; and finally, to determine if these variables interrelate differently for different genders.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

REFERENCES

Barksdale-Ladd, M. A. & Thomas, K. F. (in press). Eight teachers' self-reported pedagogical dependency upon basal readers. Elementary School Journal

Barr, R. (1987). Classroom interaction and curricular content. In D. Bloome (ed.), Literacy and Schooling (p. 150-168), Norwood, NJ.: Ablex.

Barnhart, J.E. , & Sulzby, E. (1989). Written language concepts in kindergarten children: Patterns and developmental influences. Submitted for publication.

Clay, M. M. (1966). Emergent reading behavior. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Auckland, Auckland, NZ.

Clay, M. M. (1967). The reading behavior of five-year-old children: A research report. New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, 2, 11-31.

Cochran-Smith, M. (1984). The making of a reader. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Erikson, E. H. (1963). Chidhood and Society. New York: Norton.

Gutherie, J.T., & Greaney, V. (1990). Literacy acts. In R. Barr, M.L. Kamil, P. Mosenthal, & P.D. Pearson (Eds.), Handbook of reading research volume II (pp. 728). New York: Longman.

Harste, J. C. (1989). The basalization of American reading instruction: One researcher responds. Theory into Practice, (28), 265-273.

Hycner, R. H. (1985). Some guidelines for the phenomenological analysis of interview data. Human Studies, 8, 279-303.

Lewis, H. (1990). A question of values. San Francisco: Harper.

Levande, D. I. (1990). Teacher-reported factors influencing reading instruction. Reading Improvement, 27, 2-9.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Mason, J. M. , & Allen, J. B. (1986). A review of emergent literacy with implications for research and practice in reading. Review of Research in Education, 13, 3-47.

Maslow, A. H. (1943). Conflict, frustration, and theory of of threat. Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 38, 81-86.

Piaget, J. (1959). The language and thought of the child. London: Routledge & Kegen Paul.

Shannon, P. (1989). Broken Promises, Reading instruction in twentieth-centuryAmerica. New York: Bergin & Garvey.

Strickland, D. & Morrow, L. M. (1990). Linking theory and practice: Resources for an emergent literacy curriculum. The Reading Teacher, 43, 690-691.

Sulzby, E. (1989). Assessment of writing and of children's language while writing. In L. Morrow & J. Smith (Eds.), The role of assessment and measurement in early literacy instruction (pp. 83-109). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Sulzby, E. & Teale, W. H. (1991). Emergent literacy. In R. Barr, M.L. Kamil, P. Mosenthal, & P.D. Pearson (Eds.), Handbook of reading research volume II (pp. 728). New York: Longman.

Teale, W. H. (1987). Early reading: An annotated bibliography. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Troyer, S. J. (1989). Phonemic awareness in kindergarten students: Are teachers good judges of student ability? Masters Thesis, California State University.

Troyer, S. J. , & Yopp, (1990). Kindergarten teacher's knowledge of emergent literacy concepts. Reading Improvement, 27, 34-40.

Wells, M. (1988). The roots of literacy. Psychology Today, 22, 20-22.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

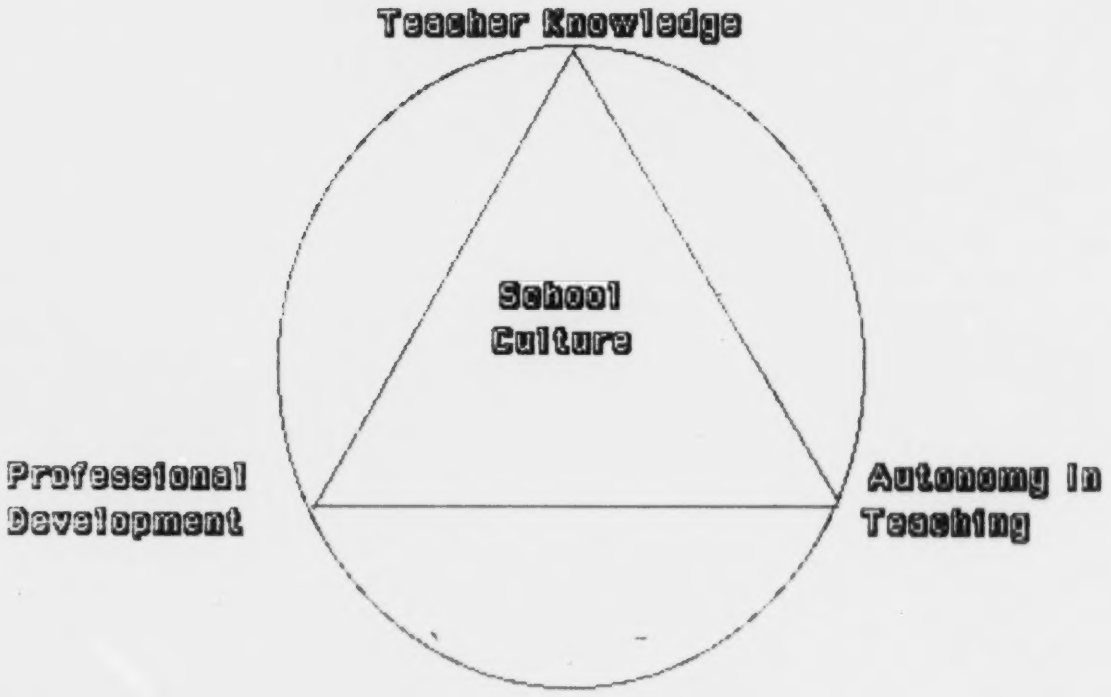
Table 1

Information on Participating Teachers

Name	#Years Teaching Experience	Degree	Session	School Setting
Ann	20	B.A.	Full Day	Rural
Agnes	25	M.A.	Half Day	Small City
Nina	10	M.A.+ 39	Half Day	Small City

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Chart Demonstrating Factor Interrelationship



BEST COPY AVAILABLE